



Representative Jim McCune

2nd Legislative District

Dear Friends,

The 2006 legislative session adjourned one day early back in March with some good news for veterans and the rest of us living in the 2nd district. I went to Olympia this year with several goals: to **help veterans, help seniors**, push for alternatives to the WASL yet keep high standards for our graduates, and to push along the transportation projects in our district. I had successes in these areas.

I'm pleased to report that a bill I sponsored, House Bill 2471, was signed by the governor this year. My bill creates a down payment assistance program for veterans and their dependents. Our veterans need all the support we can provide for their honorable service to this country, and I'm glad that I could begin this program through legislation. There is more on the new program inside this newsletter.

I'm also happy to report that I had some successes with alternatives to the WASL this session. I was able to help pass legislation that will give parents and students different ways to measure a student's readiness to graduate. I'll detail this legislation inside also.

I've been monitoring our district's transportation projects such as the cross-base highway, and working for short-term projects like adding turn lanes on the state highway in Orting. I've been told by the Department of Transportation that these projects are moving along and I'm pushing them to keep me informed.

I appreciate the opportunity to serve you as your representative in Olympia and am happy to be your independent voice in the Legislature.

I invite you to contact me any time with your ideas, questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Jim McCune
State Representative



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Committees:

- Capital Budget
- Housing
- Juvenile Justice & Family Law
- Assistant Ranking Republican
- Joint Committee Veterans' and Military Affairs

TTY (Hearing-Impaired Hotline):

1-800-635-9993

Legislative information on the Internet:

www.leg.wa.gov

State government on the Internet:

access.wa.gov

Town Hall Dates

Tuesday, April 18th

10:00 am - 11:30 am
Rainier Chapel
Hwy 507 - Rainier
(360) 446-2614

1:00 pm - 2:30 pm
Yelm Adult Community Center
201 Yelm Ave. E.
Yelm
(360) 458-7733

6:30 pm - 8 pm
Orting Multi Purpose Center
202 Washington Ave. S.
Orting
(360) 893-5200

Tuesday, April 25

6:30 pm - 8:00 pm
Eatonville Library
205 Center St.
Eatonville

Thursday, April 27

6:30 pm - 8 pm
Graham Fire & Rescue #21
10012 187th St. E.
Puyallup
(253) 847-8811

Coming Soon

Ashford Fire Station
(360) 569-2752

2006 Session in Review



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Support for 2nd District capital projects

I was able to help secure funding in the state capital budget and am happy to report that \$325,000 is heading to the 2nd District for worthwhile projects in Orting and Rainier.

The **state capital budget includes \$250,000 toward the construction of a new fire station in Orting.** The current facilities, built in the 1940s, are not large enough to house modern fire vehicles. In addition to beefing up fire response, the new fire station will provide improved hazard response and serve as an emergency shelter.



The **budget also includes \$75,000 for the Rainier Historical Society.** The Society is a nonprofit agency founded for the purpose of preserving the history of the town of Rainier. They are renovating an old school in town for use as a community outreach center and the funds will go toward this project.

Another project I supported was in a bill I sponsored for the rural fire districts. **House Bill 3257 added rural fire districts to the list of public works projects eligible for state funds.** Many of our rural fire districts are the first responders to wildfires on state lands and I feel it's important that they get this financial support. This bill made it to a public hearing in committee, but didn't get a floor vote. **I'll introduce this bill again next year.**

Housing assistance for veterans

A bill I sponsored this session, House Bill 2471, creates a down-payment assistance program for veterans. I was pleased to be surrounded by veterans and their families during the governor's signing ceremony and am happy that they were there to see this bill become law. Many veterans are just returning from Iraq and other areas and the timing of this program couldn't be better.



This bill is important to me because I believe that we need to help our veterans in any way possible for their courageous service to this country. The provisions of this bill would help veterans or their survivors purchase a home and make the American dream come true for many of them.

The program would assist Washington state veterans eligible for benefits, members and former members of the Washington National Guard, and never-remarried spouses and dependents of deceased, eligible veterans. Those that are first-time buyers would qualify for financial assistance in purchasing a home. The program would work in concert with other programs within the state Housing Finance Commission.

The HFC tells me that this program should be in place in December.

Property tax exemptions for disabled veterans

I co-sponsored another bill with my seatmate Rep. Tom Campbell that helps veterans. House Bill 2432 would have frozen the assessed value of a veteran's home and provided property tax relief for a veteran, if he or she is 100 percent disabled.

This bill passed the House unanimously, but died in the Senate. We'll try again next session to get this much-needed tax break for veterans back on the House floor for a vote.

Tuition waivers for our veterans

I supported House Bill 2233 that passed both chambers unanimously and was signed by the governor. This bill allows our colleges and universities in this state to create a tuition-waiver program for eligible veterans and members of the National Guard. It also directs these institutions to create outreach programs so that our veterans know that a tuition-waiver program is available at a specific college or university.



Rep. McCune and veterans at governor's signing ceremony for HB 2471

2006 Session in Review



Alternatives to the WASL

I began working this session to find alternatives to the Washington Assessment of Student Learning test (WASL). Many of you told me that this subjective test was unfair to students. This prompted me to do some research on the WASL. I concluded that it is imperative that we offer alternative testing. Here's a summary of some of the bills that dealt with this issue:



I co-sponsored House Bill 2414. This bill requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to conduct a pilot project in six school districts around the state to use an assessment other than the WASL at the elementary school level.



I voted for Senate Bill 6475 that creates alternative assessments so that students can demonstrate their level of achievement and won't have to rely only on the WASL.

Another bill I voted for was HB 2973. This bill creates a career and technical high school graduation option for students meeting state standards in fundamental academic content areas. This is a great alternative for students not wanting to go to college but are more interested in the trades as a career choice.

These bills are a small step in the right direction and I support using standardized tests to measure a student's proficiency. I also know we can't continue to graduate students from high school who are unable to read, write or do math. I believe that we need to hold our kids to higher standards so that they are ready to succeed after high school.

Taxes and the state budget

I've heard from many of you that your biggest gripe with government is the seemingly endless taxes that are imposed on you every year. In keeping with the independent spirit of our district, I tried to get the death tax repealed this year. This tax was reinstated by the majority last year. It taxes successful people after death and puts an unfair burden on heirs who are already dealing with a tragedy. I supported House Bill 3306 that would have repealed the tax, but the majority didn't even give it a hearing; I'll try again next year.



The majority in the House introduced the largest spending increase in state history. Spending was up 17.7 percent over the last biennial budget. The short session is for making minor corrections to the 2005 budget, not for packing it full of new spending, yet that is just what the majority party did. Instead of a maintenance level budget, they added \$468 million in new spending.



Budget experts predict this uncontrolled spending cannot be sustained in the years ahead and sets us up for tax increases. I could not support this lack of restraint and voted against the operating budget. I'll work hard again next session to keep spending and taxes under control.

Supporting our seniors

A bill I sponsored this year to help low-income seniors was House Bill 2784. This bill would have amended a property tax exemption for seniors, veterans, and disabled retirees and tied the exemption to the inflation rate. It would have also allowed qualified individuals to deduct the costs of some insurance or medical equipment from their total income to make more people eligible for tax relief. I pushed this bill as far as I could and will try again next year.



I also supported Senate Bill 6338 that amended a property tax exemption for seniors and those retired because of a disability. This bill allows low-income and disabled seniors to either exempt or defer their property taxes on their single family homes residing on property of up to five acres. Originally, the law allowed only one acre, but this bill changed it to five acres.

I'm happy to report that this made it to the governor's desk and she signed it into law this year. This bill is an important tool to allow low-income and disabled seniors to cope with the rising property values in our district.

2nd Legislative District



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Getting tough on sex offenders

I supported a series of bills this legislative session that would toughen penalties for sex offenders and tighten monitoring of offenders already on the street. I supported "Jessica's Law Plus" (HB 2476), named for 9-year-old Jessica Lunsford, the Florida girl who was murdered by a sex offender in February 2005.

I believe we've got to protect our neighborhoods. I supported this legislation because I want to make sure our families feel safe and that the most serious sex offenders stay behind bars.

House Bill 2476 called for life in prison for forcible rape of a child involving a victim under age 12, and a 25-year sentence for first-degree rape involving a child age 12 to 15 or any victim who is developmentally disabled or a frail adult. It also calls for GPS (global positioning satellite) monitoring of sex offenders and makes failure to register as a sex offender a felony.

HB 2476 was not allowed to the floor for a vote. Instead, the majority introduced House Bill 3277 that was not as tough as Jessica's Law, but did make sentences stricter for most sex offenders. I voted in favor of this bill because I wanted to toughen the laws as much as this bill would allow.



Preserving our state and district

I supported and sponsored a number of bills this session that would preserve our district through electronic recycling, give a tax break for solar power, and encourage the creation of a biofuels industry.

The bill I co-sponsored for tax breaks on solar hot water equipment was signed into law by the governor. A House version of a biofuels bill that I co-sponsored was set aside for the Senate version of that bill. This version was accepted by the majority and signed into law by the governor in March.

I supported a Senate bill that creates a recycling program for old computer equipment and televisions. This bill was signed into law by the governor also.

Town Hall Meetings!
April 18th, 25th
& 27th
See front cover
for details

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